

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for monitoring browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:

loading a client program into an operating  
5 environment of a client machine of a visitor to a Web site;

incrementing a reference count associated with the client program to maintain persistence of the client program in the operating environment during browsing by  
10 the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;

client browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the client program; and

uploading an indication of the browsing activity of  
15 the visitor over a network for processing.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising decrementing the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the client program from the  
20 operating environment of the client machine.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-  
25 decrementing object.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM  
30 object.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises an Active X control.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

5 7. The method of Claim 6, further comprising:  
decrementing the reference count to zero upon a specified event; and

10 automatically unloading the client program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

8. A client-side program for monitoring the browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:  
a medium; and

logic encoded on the medium, the logic operable to  
5 run in an operating environment of a client machine of a  
visitor to a Web site, increment a reference count  
associated with the program to maintain persistence of  
the program during browsing activity of the visitor  
across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site, monitor  
10 browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages and  
upload an indication of the browsing activity over a  
network for processing.

9. The client-side program of Claim 8, the logic  
15 further operable to decrement the reference count upon a  
specified event for automatic unloading of the program  
from the operating environment of the client machine.

10. The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the  
20 logic comprises a self-decrementing object and the  
reference count is a reference count for the self-  
decrementing object.

11. The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the  
25 logic comprises a component object model (COM) object and  
the reference count is a reference count for the COM  
object.

12. The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the  
30 program comprises an Active X control.

13. The client-side program of Claim 8, the logic operable to increment the reference count to a value greater than one.

14. The client-side program of Claim 13, the logic further operable to decrement the reference count to zero upon a specified event and automatically unload the program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

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15. A monitoring program for monitoring the activity of a visitor to a Web site from a client machine of the visitor, comprising:

5 means for incrementing a reference count associated with the monitoring program to maintain persistence of the monitoring program in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity of the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;

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10 means for monitoring browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the monitoring program; and

means for uploading an indication of the browsing activity over a network for processing.

15 16. The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising means for decrementing the reference count upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine.

20 17. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

25 18. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

30 19. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises an Active X control.

20. The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

21. The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising:

means for decrementing the reference count to zero upon a specified event; and

means for automatically unloading the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

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22. A method for controlling the persistence of a component object model (COM) object downloaded over the Internet and loaded into an operating environment of a client machine, comprising:

5 incrementing an internal reference count of the COM object to a value greater than one to maintain persistence of the COM object in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity across a plurality of Web pages; and

10 decrementing the internal reference count to zero upon a specified event for automatic unloading of the COM object from the operating environment of the client machine.

15 23. The method of Claim 22, wherein the persistence of the COM object in the operating environment is maintained across a plurality of Web sites.

20 24. The method of Claim 22, wherein at least one of the Web pages is associated with a first Web site and at least one of the Web pages is associated with a second Web site distinct from the first Web site.